This seminar examines food in its relation to Indian society by investigating cultural practices of ingestion, production and consumption of food, the moral and humoral quality of food substances, as well as their inscriptions on individual and collective bodies. Whereas Indian cuisines in some variety can be consumed in most areas in the world today, we will look at food in relation to social structure, the formation of community boundaries, taboos, beliefs and ritual, stigma, ethnic and national identity, social mobility, sexuality and morality. The reading materials draw from a wide array of sources including medical anthropology, structuralism, psychoanalysis, religious manuals, Indology, autobiography, cookbooks, movies, and history. In addition to ethnographic description it also includes primary source materials, elements of contemporary public culture, that shed light on the immense communicative power that culinary experiences hold in India, its reflection in colonial discourses, and its effects in the contemporary.

Books for Purchase:


All other readings are on electronic reserve.

Course Requirements and Grading Criteria
Take Home Mid Term Exam (30%), 5-7 pages. Take Home Final Exam (30%), 7-10 pages. Class Participation (30%), Oral Presentation (10%). Attendance in each class is required. Students have to complete all the reading and participate in class discussion.

1. Theme: Introduction (Sept.4./Sept.6)


2. Theme: Defilement and Remainder, (Sept.11/Sept.13)


3. Theme: **Old Classifications and Ancient Revolutions** (Sept.18/Sept.20)

A.L Basham. “Food and Drink.” In The Wonder that was India, pp. 213-215, 1954.


4. Theme: **Ingesting Mother** (Sept.25/Sept.27)


Vandana Shiva. “Mad Cows and Sacred Cows,” In Stolen Harvest. The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply, Chap. 4, pp. 57-75.


5. Theme: **Divine Exchange** (Oct.2/Oct.4)


6. Theme: **Sacrifice** (Oct.9/Oct.11)


7. Theme: **Documentary Movie, to be announced** (Oct.16/Oct.18)

Mid term Exam

8. Theme: **Community Boundaries** (Oct. 23/Oct25)


9. Theme: Food and Social Reform (Oct.30/Nov.1)


10. Theme: Violence and Animals (Nov.6/Nov.8)

Source Materials:


11. Theme: The Celibate Body (Nov.13/Nov.15)


Source Materials:


12. Theme: Nation and Diaspora (Nov. 20/Nov.22)


Rec. Selection of readings of the proceedings of the Indian Vegetarian Congress (IVC)

13. Theme: Food and Communal Conflict (Nov.27/Nov.29)


**14. Theme: Conclusion** (Dec. 4/ Dec. 6)

**Final Exam**